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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 143299

EXDIS MILITARY HANDLE AS SPECATE EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 2942 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN
CAIRO DAMASCUS TELAVIV JUN 20.
QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2942

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR LE
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON AND ARAB-ISRAEL PROBLEM: MEETING WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER JUNE 19

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
JUNE 19 TO DISCUSS U.S. POLICY TOWARD SOUTH LEBANON
AND ARAB-ISRAEL SETTLEMENT. AMBASSADOR REITERATED
THAT, CONTRARY TO PRESS SPECULATION, THERE HAS BEEN
NO CHANGE IN AMERICAN POLICY WITH RESPECT TO EITHER
OF THESE QUESTIONS. BOUTROS UNDERSTOOD THIS WAS CASE
AND HAD PREPARED REASSURING STATEMENT ON SUBJECT
TO MAKE TO PARLIAMENTARY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
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FOLLOWING DAY. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS CAME TO YARZE FOR
LUNCE JUNE 19. LUNCH HAD BEEN ARRANGED SOME DAYS
EARLIER IN ORDER HAVE RELAXED DISCUSSION VARIOUS
OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS. SINCE THEN THERE HAS BEEN
GOOD DEAL OF SPECULATION IN LEBANESE PRESS ABOUT

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CHANGES IN AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD SOUTH LEBANON AND ARAB-ISRAEL PROBLEM IN GENERAL. PRESS HAS REPORTED THAT I HAVE TOLD GOL WE NO LONGER PREPARED GUARANTEE ISRAEL WOULD NOT ATTACK THE SOUTH AND THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO USE OUR INFLUENCE OR PRESSURE ON PARTIES TO EFFECT NEAR EASTERN SETTLEMENT. THAT THERE NEVER WERE ANY U.S. "GUARANTEES" ABOUT SOUTH LEBANON HAS BEEN IRRELEVANT AS FAR AS LEBANESE PRESS IS CONCERNED. THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO IMPOSE SETTLEMENT, AS WE HAVE MADE CLEAR IN NUMER OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS, IS SOMETHING LEBANESE FIND DISAPPOINTING BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE IMPOSITION IS ONLY WAY OUT OF IMPASSE. THEY FURTHERMORE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN IMPOSITION AND USE OF INFLUENCE. OUR SENIOR FSL, WHO AFTER 25 YEARS OF SERVICE WITH US SHOULD KNOW BETTER, TOLD ME THIS MORNING THAT ALL WE HAD TO DO WAS TO TELL ISRAEL TO WITHDRAW AND IT WOULD WITHDRAW.

3. BOUTROS AND I STARTED OFF BY ASKING EACH OTHER HOW PRESS HAD LEARNED THAT HE WAS COMING TO VISIT ME THAT DAY. A NUMBER OF PAPERS HAD REPORTED HE WAS DOING SO. HE SAID HE HAD NOT RELEASED IT, AND ONLY PERSON IN HIS MINISTRY WHO KNEW ABOUT IT WAS HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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SECRETARY. HE SPECULATED THAT SOMEBODY HAD LOOKED AT HIS CALENDAR AND THEN INFORMED THE PRESS. THIS IS INDICATIVE OF STATE OF DISCIPLINE IN FOREIGN MINISTRY.

4. I SAID PRESS CAMPAIGN ABOUT GUARANTEES AND CHANGES IN U.S. POLICY TOWARDS ARAB-ISRAEL SETTLEMENT WAS EXERCISE IN IMAGINATION BECAUSE THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANGE IN OUR POLICIES ON THESE QUESTIONS. BOUTROS AGREED AND SAID HE HAD TRIED TO DISABUSE PRESS SEVERAL DAYS AGO WITHOUT SUCCESS. HE WAS SCHEDULED TO APPEAR BEFORE JOINT SESSION OF PARLIAMENTARY FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE COMMITTEES MORNING JUNE 20, AND OUR MEETING WAS THEREFORE TIMELY. HE PLANNED TO MAKE STATEMENT ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: USG HAD NEVER GIVEN "GUARANTEES" WITH REGARD TO THE PROBLEM OF THE SOUTH OR OTHER PROBLEMS IN THE AREA. USG HELD IT NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING WHICH MIGHT HAPPEN AND IT NOT WITHIN ITS POWER TO GUARANTEE FUTURE EVENTS. U.S. HAD, HOWEVER, GIVEN "ASSURANCES" THAT IT WOULD USE ITS GOOD OFFICES AND INFLUENCE WITH THE PARTIES TO HELP KEEP SITUATION CALM. IT HAD IN FACT DONE SO IN RECENT PAST. WITH

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REGARD TO PRESENT SITUATION IN SOUTH, USG DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS CAUSE FOR CONCERN ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS TOWARD SOUTH LEBANON.

5. I AGREED THIS STATEMENT SOUNDED REASONABLE AND HELPFUL. BOUTROS APPARENTLY WAS WAYLAID BY PRESS AFTER HE LEFT MY HOUSE AND MADE PARTIAL STATEMENT ALONG ABOVE LINES, WHICH WE ASSUME HAS BEEN CARRIED BY FBIS.

6. I THEN GAVE BOUTROS RUNDOWN MY VIEWS OF SITUATION IN SOUTH. SAID THAT THREE WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS, TWO OF THEM AMERICAN, HAD BEEN TO AREA IN PAST WEEK AND HAD FOUND SITUATION ON THE GROUND QUIET.
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ARTILLERY EXCHANGES SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN PROVOKED IN PART BY PALESTINIANS BUT DID NOT APPEAR TO BE PART OF ANY CONCERTED EFFORT TO START A MAJOR FIGHT. ONE CORRESPONDENT HAD SEEN MAJOR HADDAD IN MARJAYUN AND FOUND HIM IN NO POSITION UNDERTAKE ADVENTURES. ALL THREE CORRESPONDENTS HAD BEEN TO TYRE AND HAD FOUND SITUATION THERE PEACEFUL. ALLEGATION TO ME BY ADEL OSSEIRAN THAT WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS UNABLE TO GO OUT ON STREETS FOR FEAR OF BEING RAPED APPEARED UNFOUNDED. CORRESPONDENTS HAD SEEN WOMEN AND SCHOOLGIRLS, AS WELL AS BOYS, MOVING FREELY THROUGH THE TOWN AND THERE WAS NO INDICATION THEY AFRAID OF ANYTHING. I HAD REPORTED LEBANESE CONCERN TO WASHINGTON AS WELL AS TO POSTS IN AREA, AND WASHINGTON HAD AGREED IT WOULD BE GOOD IDEA TO SOUND OUT ISRAELIS AFTER FORMATION BEGIN CABINET. THERE WAS DIFFICULTY TO FIND ANYONE TO TALK TO AT PRESENT, BUT AMBASSADOR LEWIS HAD HAPPENED TO SEE EZER WEIZMAN AND SHLOMO GAZIT AND HAD RECEIVED FROM THEM ASSURANCES THAT NOTHING NEW WAS GOING ON IN BORDER AREA AND ISRAELIS HAD NO AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS TOWARD LEBANON. WE HAD ALSO REPORTED LEBANESE CONCERN OVER MESSAGE FROM MAJOR HADDAD THAT HE WAS ABOUT TO "ATTACK THE FOREIGNERS." OUR PEOPLE IN TEL AVIV HAD GOTTEN IN TOUCH WITH ISRAELI MILITARY ON SUBJECT. LATTER HAD TAKEN IT VERY SERIOUSLY AND HAD ASSURED OUR PEOPLE THAT HADDAD WOULD NOT BE DOING ANYTHING. IN BRIEF, ALTHOUGH CIVILIAN POPULATION OF THE AREA UNDOUBTEDLY MISERABLE, SERIOUSNESS OF MILITARY ASPECT OF PROBLEM HAD BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED.

7. BOUTROS ASKED HOW WE EXPLAINED INCREASED
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ISRAELI RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS AND PATROLLING. I SAID I WAS NOT SURE BUT THOUGHT IT PROBABLY PRECAUTIONARY AND DEFENSIVE. PERHAPS IT WAS RELATED TO REPORTS THAT FATAH WAS MOVING SOME OF ITS HEAVY WEAPONS TO THE SOUTH.

8. BOUTROS ASKED WHY, IF SITUATION AS AS DESCRIBED, THERE HAD BEEN ALL THIS SPECULATION. I SAID MASS HYSTERIA SEEMED MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION TO ME. IT WAS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT SOMEONE TRYING TO CAUSE TROUBLE WAS PEDDLING MISINFORMATION. BOUTROS THEN ASKED WHAT COULD BE DONE ABOUT PROBLEM. DID WE THINK IDEA OF UN FORCE WAS WORKABLE? I REITERATED MY COMMENT TO PRIME MINISTER HOSS THAT FIRST STEP WOULD BE FOR LEBANESE TO DECIDE WHETHER SUCH A FORCE WOULD BE EFFECTIVE. LEBANESE WHO MENTIONED THIS IDEA SEEMED TO THINK PROBLEM WAS PROTECTING THE LEBANESE FROM THE ISRAELIS. IT WAS NOT. IT WAS PROBLEM OF PROTECTING THEM FROM PALESTINIANS. ISRAELIS FOR THEIR PART WERE PROTECTED TO SOME EXTENT AGAINST PALESTINIAN INCURSION BY PRESENCE OF LEBANESE FORCES IN VILLAGES ALONG BORDER, AND THIS WAS SITUATION THEY FOUND QUITE TOLERABLE.

9. BOUTROS SAID "PALESTINIANS ARE BEGINNING TO ACT LIKE THE SOUTH IS PART OF THEIR HOMELAND, AREN'T THEY?" I AGREED THEY GAVE THAT IMPRESSION. BOUTROS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD ISRAELIS WERE AGAINST IDEA OF UN FORCE. I SAID THEY HAD NOT LIKED THE IDEA WHEN IT CAME UP LAST FEBRUARY, BUT IF LEBANESE HAD OPTED FOR UN FORCE THEN, WE WOULD HAVE SUPPORTED THEIR REQUEST AND I BELIEVED THAT ONE COULD HAVE BEEN ARRANGED. WE HAD UNDERSTOOD, HOWEVER, THAT OPINION AT CAIRO SUMMIT WAS SO NEGATIVE ON THE SUBJECT THAT SARKIS HAD DECIDED AGAINST IT.

10. BOUTROS ASKED WHAT EVERYONE'S POSITION WOULD BE NOW. I SAID I DID NOT KNOW, BUT THE MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT IT THE LESS CERTAIN I WAS THAT THE UN FORCE COULD SETTLE THIS ESSENTIALLY FAMILY QUARREL. THIS WAS UNFORTUNATE BECAUSE PROBLEM TODAY SEEMED TOO BIG FOR LEBANESE TO HANDLE. BOUTROS AGREED.

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11. I THEN MENTIONED TO BOUTROS THE UNHELPFUL SPECULATION IN LOCAL PRESS THAT I HAD TOLD PRESIDENT SARKIS WE WERE NO LONGER PREPARED TO USE OUR INFLUENCE TO HELP BRING ABOUT MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. I READ TO HIM PRESIDENT CARTER'S RESPONSE TO MR. DIMBLEBY ON THIS QUESTION IN HIS MAY 2 INTERVIEW BY EUROPEAN BROADCAST JOURNALISTS (P. 547 OF MAY 30 DEPARTMENT OF STATE BULLETIN), TO EFFECT THAT HE WOULD NOT BE HESITANT, IF HE SAW CLEARLY A FAIR AND EQUITABLE SOLUTION, TO USE ALL THE STRENGTH AND PERSUASIVE POWERS OF OUR COUNTRY TO BRING THOSE PARTIES TO AGREEMENT, RECOGNIZING THMSSAT WE CANNOT IMPOSE OUR WILL ON OTHERS AND THAT, UNLESS THE COUNTRIES INVOLVED AGREE, THERE IS NO WAY FOR US TO MAKE PROGRESS. I ALSO READ TO HIM EXCERPTS FROM VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE'S SAN FRANCISCO SPEECH AND SAID I THOUGHT THESE WERE PRETTY CLEAR INDICATIONS OF SERIOUSNESS OF OUR PURPOSE AND CONSTANCY OF OUR POLICY. BOUTROS TOOK THE POINT.
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